

MOSES MECHAM AND  
ELVIRA DERBY

Leonidas Moses Worthen Mecham was born July 22, 1804, at Canaan, Grafton County, New Hampshire, son of Joshua Mecham and Permelia Chapman. He married Elvira Derby on November 28, 1827. She was born in Grafton County to John Derby and Sarah Currier on November 6, 1811.

Shortly after their marriage, Moses and Elvira moved to Mercer, Pennsylvania. Here seven children were born. Then they moved to Kendrick, Iowa, where their child America was born. The glowing reports of the Oregon country started them westward.

In Iowa he engaged in the mercantile business, being very successful and prosperous. During 1838 he learned that his father's family and Joshua had joined the Church. Moses became much worried, for he had seen what bloodthirsty mobs had done where he lived.

He studied hard the LDS belief to see why his people had joined, but it seemed he could not obtain a testimony to the truthfulness of the gospel. One night he startled the members of his family by speaking in tongues. They had never heard such a thing before and supposed that he was delirious. While speaking in tongues he took the old family Bible and read from it, still speaking in tongues. His wife understood and started reading the passages to the family as he turned from one section to another in the Bible, all dealing with the restoration of the gospel. This experience convinced them that the gospel was true and they decided to apply for baptism. They

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After joining the Church, Moses and his family returned to Lee, Iowa. During this period he met persecution along with the rest of the saints, losing his mercantile business and other possessions. Moses, along with his father, Joshua, and his son, Clinton, had the privilege on several occasions to act as a bodyguard for the Prophet Joseph Smith.

On June 29, 1849, Moses was ordained a Seventy by Elder Joseph Young. On December 30, 1845, he and Elvira were sealed to each other, along with other members of their family, in the Nauvoo Temple.

They moved to Van Buren, Iowa, then to Council Bluffs. In 1853, Moses, Elvira and the unmarried children moved to Utah Valley, settling at Lehi, where he had charge of the toll gate at Jordan Narrows for about a year. Their last child was born there.

From Lehi they moved to Provo, where Moses taught school several years. He had his feelings hurt through a misunderstanding with a leader in the Church, which he couldn't bring himself around to forgiving. This caused him to lose the gift he had been blest with from the time of his conversion, that of speaking in tongues. He quit teaching school and moved to the mouth of Provo Canyon as toll keeper. Here he planted an orchard and garden. The young trees just started to bear when a flash flood cut a channel through his little farm and destroyed most of it.

This experience humbled him and gave him the spirit of forgiveness, thus helping him to become happy again. His health was very poor the last years of his life.

A few nights before his death he told his daughter Martha that she could speak in tongues if she desired, which she did immediately, strengthening the testimony of the family.

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